

A tribute to Hugh Hampton Young – the father of modern urology

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The relationship of general surgery to the surgical problems involving the genitourinary tract was recognized early. Urological surgery for many years was performed by general surgeons and many of the early urologists came from the general surgical group. A notable example is late Hugh Hampton Young, who is considered the father of modern urology. He was working as an assistant in the surgery dispensary under Halsted [1].

Hugh Young was born in 18th September 1870, at San Antonio, Texas. His father had attended the University of Virginia prior to the outbreak of the Civil War and some 35 years later Hugh Young enrolled there. By dint of hard work, he was awarded not only BA and MA, but MD, all in four years ending in 1891. This was the first and probably last time such a feat had been accomplished [2].

He then went to join Johns Hopkins Medical Institution at Baltimore for further training. But very soon he became the in-charge of genito-urinary surgery department.

According to his autobiography – “One day on the October 1897, I was walking rapidly down the long corridor of hospital. As I turned the corner I ran into Dr. Halsted with great force and almost knocked him down. I caught him just

before he hit the floor and began to apologize profusely. Dr. Halsted, still out of breath, said, ‘Don’t apologize, Young. I was just looking for you, to tell you we want you to take charge of the department of genito-urinary surgery’. I thanked him and said, this is a great surprise. I know nothing about genito-urinary surgery”. Dr. Halsted replied, “Welch and I said that you know nothing about it, but we believed you could learn” [3].

This was the beginning of Young’s illustrious career and his quest of solving various urological problems, innovating newer urological operations and instruments as well as building new generation of urologists. He started the residency system in the urology department and established James Buchanan Bardy Urological Institute at Johns Hopkins Medical institution. There he devoted

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Fig. 1 Hugh Hampton Young

himself as professor of urology for longtime and worked as chairman from 1897 to 1941.

In those days antibiotics were almost non-existent and various chemical solutions including mercuric compounds were used for hand scrubbing as well as preparation of surgical field at Johns Hopkins Medical Institution. Dr. Young popularized use of Mercurochrome as local antiseptic as well as systemic antibacterial agent. When his wife Bessie developed streptococcus viridans septicemia he tried to cure her with intravenous Mercurochrome injection. Unfortunately she died of violent blood transfusion reaction [4].

He published several papers and wrote books like "Young's Practice of Urology".

Perineal removal of enlarged prostate was designed in 1903 by Dr. Hugh Young. This operation requires a clean dissection of the Perineal structures necessitating clear knowledge of regional anatomy [5].

He then turned his attention to endoscopic removal of bladder neck stenosis and small fibrous prostate. It was however Young's Punch, backed up by electrical light cystoscopy and the benefit of diathermy coagulation which first made transurethral resection feasible and safe [6]. Today trans-urethral resection is gold standard for operative management of small and moderately enlarged prostate.

Radical prostatectomy is the answer for the treatment of organ confined carcinoma prostate. One can not discuss the subject of total perineal prostatectomy without paying homage to Hugh H Young who paved the way for all modern perineal prostatectomies [7].

Posterior urethral valves were originally classified by Young in his first article on the subject, published in 1919 [8] and he developed a transurethral "punch" for treating by destruction of valves [9].

The lives of children were miserable due to incontinence after repair of ectopia vesicae. In 1937 Young described a "double sphincter" reconstruction of the vesical neck through a midline suprapubic incision that opened into the bladder. The epispadias was repaired at the same time [10].

He should be credited for many other innovations such as repair of urethral diverticulum [11] and rectourethral fistula [12] to name but a few.

Dr. Young always dreamt to make urology practice well organised and disciplined. Rightly he was elected as president of American Urology Association from 1907–1908. In 1917, he founded the 'Journal of Urology', the most prestigious and widely circulated journal in urology throughout the world. He edited the journal for several years.

Beyond his distinguished career in urology, Hugh Young was involved in various social activities. He became chairman of State Aviation Committee and led to the construction of Friendship Airport, which later became Baltimore-Washington International Airport. During his chairmanship of Lunacy Commission he secured state laws and funds to construct building for care of insane patients. To his honor the entire building was named after him: The Hugh H. Young Psychopathic Building. He remained president of the Lyric Theater Company in Baltimore until his death in 1945 [4].

Hugh Young library at John Hopkins reminds us his devotion for teaching. To honor his memory Bristol Laboratories of Syracuse, New York, established the 'Hugh Hampton Young' award, in 1969, an honorarium of \$ 2000 given every year by American urological association for outstanding contribution in the field of Urology.

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